

NOPNA News

nopna.org

North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association

2019 : issue 3



PHOTO: Michelle Petersen

Joe Thompson and Fracture Comics

Joe Thompson discovered his dreams in 1990's NOPA. Raised in an incredibly loving, nurturing home on Baker Street—where his family has resided for over 60 years—Joe was always encouraged to be creative.

Joe has fond memories of birthday parties at Golden Gate Park, learning to ride his bike in the Panhandle, and riding the horse at the playground near Masonic. His mother was an English teacher and his father studied history and urban studies. Joe loved to draw, so his father filled his Easter baskets with sketch books and art supplies. His mother read to him every night and from a very young age he loved to read. His father collected comic books and shared his interests in super heroes with Joe, watching cartoons with him and taking him to Toys 'R' Us. Comic books are where Joe found inspiration and his calling in life.

Today, Joe owns the Comic Book Company Fracture Comics and works in the Comix Experience Outpost. Joe has partnered with Chris Adams to publish their comic books and the duo is currently featured in the documentary Table Stakes. The documentary short centers on Joe and Chris' story, two African American comic book writers working to make it in a field dominated by white and Asian writers, revealing the struggles they've had to overcome. Director Khai Thu Nguyen wanted to highlight artists of color in the comic book and movie industry, and the challenges they face to gain audience attention. Nominated for Best Short Film at the San Diego

FROM THE BOARD

Help us sustain and grow.

Three summers ago, I started volunteering with NOPNA with the goal of connecting with the neighborhood where my husband and two-and-half year old son are growing our roots. I began volunteering by writing an article to learn more about what NOPNA is. I learned that NOPNA is an incredibly small, non-profit organization that offers large-scale events and forums to connect our neighbors and elevate our community's voice, including general meetings, the annual block party, Halloween block party, Holiday celebration, and neighborhood newsletter. Making this all happen requires lots of volunteer hours and monetary support.

When I wanted to do more, the idea of starting a business outreach team was born. The goal of the business outreach team is to liaise with our local businesses and neighbors to sustain the cost of these activities and forums. To date, we've been making improvements in soliciting donations. Our longer-term goal is to create an annual campaign that gives NOPNA a consistent and stable funding stream in order to plan more activities for the neighborhood.

Just like my fellow board members, I believe that we can shape how our community will grow through empathy and action; but this can only be done through your volunteer and monetary support. If you're interested in donations, sponsorships or joining the business outreach team, please reach out to Carmen Chan by emailing sponsorships@nopna.org.



Carmen Chan is a San Francisco native who has lived in NOPA for the past 8+ years. She hopes to bring her professional experience in client management and operations as well as her passion for local businesses to build a stronger relationship between NOPNA and the local business owners we all rely on.



The NOPNA News is published by the North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association for the residents, businesses, and friends of our neighborhood, which is bounded by Masonic Avenue and Turk, Divisadero and Fell Streets.

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NOPNA's mission: The purpose of this association shall be to establish neighborhood unity, maintain multi-ethnic and multi-cultural diversity, foster a sense of neighborhood pride, promote a safe and clean community, and improve the quality of life for all residents of the neighborhood.

Your financial support allows NOPNA to cover the costs of our newsletters, community building events like our block party and holiday party, public art projects in the neighborhood, and other activities that enrich our dynamic neighborhood. It also supports this site.

Make a difference on our streets and become a member today!

Contact NOPNAboard@nopna.org | www.nopna.org

Calendar of Events

NOPNA Annual Holiday PartySaturday, December 7
6:30 – 9:00 pm
Jannah, 1775 Fulton**NOPNA General Meetings**Thursday, Nov. 21, 7 pm
Thursday, Jan. 16, 7 pm
City Real Estate | 629 Divisadero**Farmers Market**Sundays, 10 am – 2 pm
DMV Parking Lot
Broderick@Fell**SFPD Park Station****Community Meetings**
Second Tuesday each month, 6 pm
Park Station Community Room
1899 Waller St.**Panhandle Park Stewards**Second Saturday each month
9am – 12pm
Bulletin Board near Panhandle
Playground

Joe Thompson and Fracture Comics (cont.)



PHOTO: Leela Gill

Black Film Festival 2019, the documentary has also been screened at Afro Comic Con and SF Doc Fest at the Roxie Theater and was featured at the California Independent Film Festival.

Joe's published comic books include Hellfire, ARK: Academy of Research and Kinesis, Godhand, and Sugar Rush. He tends to write darker stories that incorporate either horror or science fiction, inspired by the greats: Frank Miller, Kentaro Miura, Yoshihiro Togashi, Cullen Bunn, Hiroya Oku, Katsuhiro Otomo, Rumiko Takahashi, and One.

Striving to create inclusive worlds where everyone is represented, Joe hopes to one day utilize his master's degree in film from the Academy of Art to bring his stories to the big screen.

Joe's comic books can be purchased from his website www.fracturecomics.com or in person at various events. You can find more information on their website or follow them on Instagram: @Fracturecomics.

Michelle Petersen has lived in NOPA for 2 years. She loves the history of the neighborhood and the many great restaurants. She has also been a volunteer and written oral histories for the Mill Valley Historical Society.

Jennifer Rosdail
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How Neighborhood Activism Preserved Our Neighborhood

We enjoy strolling or biking along the Panhandle, the accessible and extraordinary park in our own backyard. Few remember when the Panhandle was almost destroyed and turned into an urban thoroughfare.

From the early 20th Century through to the 1960's, the City, along with the entire country, was caught up in accommodating ever-expanding car ownership and the growing tentacles of the Interstate Highway System.

Here in San Francisco, the Central, Alemany and Bayshore freeways appeared first. City planners and developers wanted more, and envisioned bringing the Central Freeway all the way along the Panhandle and eventually connecting to the Golden Gate Bridge.

Beyond the park's destruction, between 415 and 500 people were to be removed from their homes and relocated away from the Panhandle corridor, replaced by new housing along the periphery. The City already had a very disturbing history of urban renewal. Since the 1940's, major sections of the Fillmore and Western Addition were decimated, with many residents displaced.

"Many citizens were losing their appetite for sacrificing neighborhoods for grand civic projects," said Griffen Estes, in "The Panhandle Freeway and The Revolt That Saved The Park."

When the City Recreation and Parks Commission unanimously approved the Panhandle proposal in 1964, San Franciscans rose up and turned to action, attending Supervisor meetings, writing letters, and holding rallies to make their opposition heard.

As contemporary Chronicle writer Harold Gilliam warned, "the Panhandle planners' calculations were once again blind to the social cost that the project would have on the nature of the city itself." *

The people of San Francisco did finally win this fight. In 1966 the Board of Supervisors voted 6 – 5 to reject both the Panhandle and the complementary Golden Gate Freeway.

The civic activism and engagement of previous residents established a valuable precedent. Today, as city planning and the private real estate developers take it upon themselves to envision solutions to the extremely important problem of affordable housing and economic diversity, it is just as crucial as ever that the residents of NOPA involve, engage, and openly dialogue with all stakeholders. The future of our city is at stake.

Steve Nuzzo has lived on in NOPA since 2005, and in San Francisco for over 40 years. He is an educator at heart, and has taught in public schools and universities in the Bay Area, in addition to leading communication training workshops throughout the US, Europe, and Asia. He loves riding his bike through the Panhandle, out to the beach, and up and down the coast.

**Battle of the Panhandle', March 29 1964, Chronicle, Harold Gilliam.*

Sources: (Chronicle, July 11 1964, 'Panhandle Parkway Approved'), (Chronicle, May 9 1964, 'Building Unions Back Parkway Freeway'), (SF Call, Oct 14. 1964, "MacAteer warns on Panhandle"), (Chronicle, May 1 1964, 'Brown Will Push for More SF Freeways')



With every neighborhood comes a community of unique and diverse people, restaurants and locales. Moving to a new neighborhood and becoming part of a new community is one of the many joys of building a new life in a new area. Choose NOPA for your next move and establish roots in the distinct community that comes with it. Take it from Bonnie, who has lived in NOPA for over 25 years.



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Annual Block Party

Not even the blustery San Francisco winds could dampen the jubilant atmosphere at our annual NOPA Block Party in June! Thank you to all of the neighbors who came out to enjoy the music, family yoga, fire truck, bounce house, face painting, arts & crafts, games, and food from local vendors.

We could not have put on this event without the support of our community. NOPNA would like to thank the families on Baker between Fulton and Grove, the volunteers who came out to help set up and break down the event and our local businesses and organizations that made this event possible through contributions or participation. We are all looking forward to next year!

If your neighborhood business or organization would like to participate next year, please contact board@nopna.org.

Jennifer Brandl Jennifer Brandl is a neighborhood resident since 2013, NOPNA News aficionado, and NOPA business patron. She is passionate about volunteering and contributing to communities.



PHOTOS: Leela Gill

Meet a Neighbor on the SFMTA Board

Hello neighbors! My name is Amanda Eaken. Last September, I was appointed by Mayor London Breed to serve on the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), a seven-member citizen board to provide policy direction and oversee all of the agency's operations. I have lived in NOPA for 6 years with my husband and two children (and previously lived on Grove Street in the early 2000s). I love this neighborhood and feel fortunate to live here.

I wanted to share a little bit about the agency, the Board, and how you can get involved.

SFMTA is charged with implementing the four goals of its strategic plan:

1. Create a safer transportation experience for everyone.
2. Make transit and other sustainable modes of transportation the most attractive and preferred means of travel.
3. Improve the quality of life and environment in San Francisco and the region.
4. Create a workplace that delivers outstanding service.

The SFMTA Board meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 1pm on the 4th floor of city hall (agendas are posted at SFMTA.com). The SFMTA is unlike any transportation agency in the country. Established by the voters in 1999, SFMTA has oversight over the

Municipal Railway (Muni) public transit, as well as bicycling, paratransit, parking, traffic, walking, and taxis.

I am honored to serve on the SFMTA board because I believe a great transportation system is necessary for a thriving, healthy, and equitable city. I believe cities should be places for people, and that it is our duty at SFMTA to make it easy, safe, and affordable for people to get around, whatever mode you choose to travel. Pedestrian safety has particularly come into focus for me in the past few years as our daughters have become old enough to start walking to school by themselves.

Since becoming a member of the Board of Directors, I take personally the responsibility to make the streets safe for all San Franciscans to use, and am a strong advocate for San Francisco's Vision Zero goal to eliminate all traffic fatalities by 2024.



I am proud of my NOPNA colleagues who volunteer their time to make the streets in our neighborhood safer, and to ensure more, better, safer transportation options. In addition to SFMTA's work in this space, you can read about NOPNA's Vision Zero committee elsewhere in this issue.

I hope to see you out on a bike ride in the panhandle some time. Feel free to find me on Twitter at @aeaken and share any thoughts you may have.

Amanda Eaken's day job is Director of Transportation at the Natural Resources Defense Council, where she leads an initiative called the American Cities Climate Challenge to cut carbon pollution and make 25 US cities more sustainable for their residents.

The African American Church in Nopa: Part 3 (final)

When I commenced a walking exploration of NOPA in late 2018 to determine the number of African American churches in our neighborhood, I reported in the inaugural article of this series that I counted seven and I listed them and their addresses (2019: Issue 1). That listing, however, did not include Emanuel Church of God In Christ—1649 Hayes Street, partly because I was uncertain of its ethnicity and it was not until after I had submitted Part 2 of this series that I was able to attend a Sunday worship service at Emanuel.

Upon entering the church on June 9 this year, I was warmly greeted by a smiling young African American male: "...welcome to Emanuel", he said pointing me to the sanctuary where I observed the service was underway; I sat near the rear so I could better view the congregation, the subtle elegance of the pulpit framed

by the American flag and portraits of previous pastors—no doubt about it, this is an African American church. As current pastor, Rev. Yul Dorn, stated to me in my brief interview with him after the worship service, "We are an inclusive church, we welcome all...!" Pastor Dorn speaks with justifiable pride of Emanuel's 79 year history in San Francisco—the church has been at its current site since 1972, having relocated there from its founding location on Post Street in the Western Addition as a result of the redevelopment program. Pastor Dorn said that the acquisition of its Post Street location by the Redevelopment Agency and its relocation assistance enabled Emanuel to "...pay cash for this site...we were treated well by the redevelopment program."

Emanuel's longevity in NOPA—with an impetus from the Western Addition A-2

redevelopment program—is of a kind with that of New Liberation Presbyterian Church (1100 Divisadero Street) and Little Zion Baptist Church (1245 Divisadero Street), both profiled in Part 2 (2019: issue 2). The eight African American churches noted in this series—though not all profiled—predate the formation of NOPNA, and because of the emblematic cultural significance of the African American church in the arc of African American history, these churches—in my view—contribute mightily to the sublime grace of this vibrant neighborhood.

Carl Williams is an attorney and writer with a wide-ranging interest in African American history, religious, and literary culture. He and his wife Jayne, also an attorney, are homeowners on Broderick Street since 1977.



Reverend Yul Dorn after services at Emanuel Church



Free Micro-Libraries



Mickey Mouse Comics, Fifty Shades of Grey, and War and Peace. What do these titles have in common? Well, just a little free library and an active community of readers.

We mounted and installed a little wooden library in front of our place at 2106 Golden

Gate near Central last September and the success has been beyond any expectations: the library gets new titles every week (it has never been empty) and it sparks conversations with and between passersby — (no, not via chat, they talk to each other!). Some books make their way back to the library and start a new journey with another reader just a few days later.

It occasionally becomes fully multimedia, as DVDs are added to the library (we spotted a good old cassette audio-tape —

well, some of us know what that is, maybe even able to use it). Whether it is a neighbor, a student of the nearby school, or a homeless person, this little wooden container has offered quite a number of stories to read and to tell.

We are one of two Little Free Libraries in the neighborhood, there is another one at Turk near Broderick. If you'd like to learn more about Little Free Libraries or create one of your own - you can learn more about them here... <https://littlefreelibrary.org/>

Hope you have a chance Come and to come by and check it out, take a book, leave a book. Next time you may see one or more copies of the NOPNA magazine (if they don't get picked up right away).

Francesco Rovetta (Franz is the nickname, but he is Italian) has been a NoPa resident with his wife Lizzy for 7 years — he is in a triathlon phase and always starts the day with a real espresso.

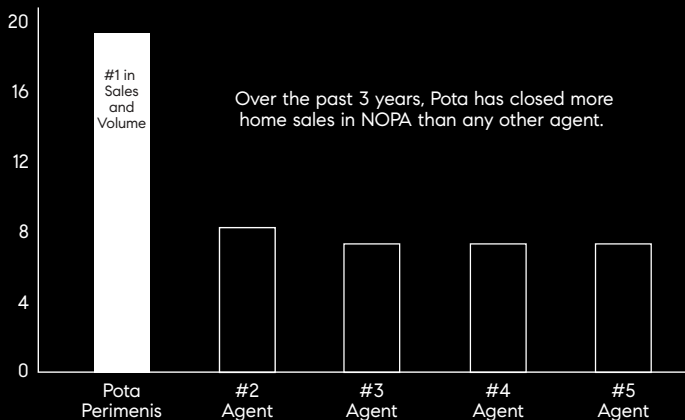


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What's Poppin in the Panhandle



PHOTO: Joseph Wilinski | www.joewilinski.com

It could be argued that the best thing about San Francisco is its urban parks. As a non-native San Franciscan, I'm constantly awed by the beauty and ubiquity of our hilly city's green oases. With over 24 million visitors per year to Golden Gate Park alone, it's clear that San Franciscans know how to integrate nature into daily life, and strive to make it a point of civic pride. This probably comes as no surprise to the readers of the NOPNA News, as our neighborhood is proximal to many parks and is literally defined in relation to one in particular—the Panhandle.

On a recent, unseasonably warm Saturday, the Panhandle was teeming with sunbathers, strollers, bikers, ballers, and at least one very impressive juggler. It's clear that this park is used by a wide range of people for a diverse set of activities, and it got me thinking about the way the park has changed (and is changing) to meet the needs of our neighbors.

One of the most obvious changes currently underway is the Panhandle

Playground renovation. In early April of this year, work began to upgrade the Panhandle Playground, thanks to a generous donation from the San Francisco Parks Alliance. The project is one component of the Lets Play SF initiative, which will renovate thirteen parks throughout the city over the coming years.

The new Panhandle playground is designed by RHAA Landscape Architects in Mill Valley. The design features a variety of play equipment, including the usual suspects like swings and sand, as well as musical elements and even a slide built into a rock embankment. Construction is scheduled to conclude in 2019, and more information can be found at www.sfrecpark.org.

The playground is not the only change happening with the Panhandle this year. Dale Danley, who has been the leader of the Panhandle Park Stewards for ten years, is stepping down in December. The Panhandle Park Stewards are a group of volunteers dedicated to maintaining the natural beauty of the park through organizing capital improve-

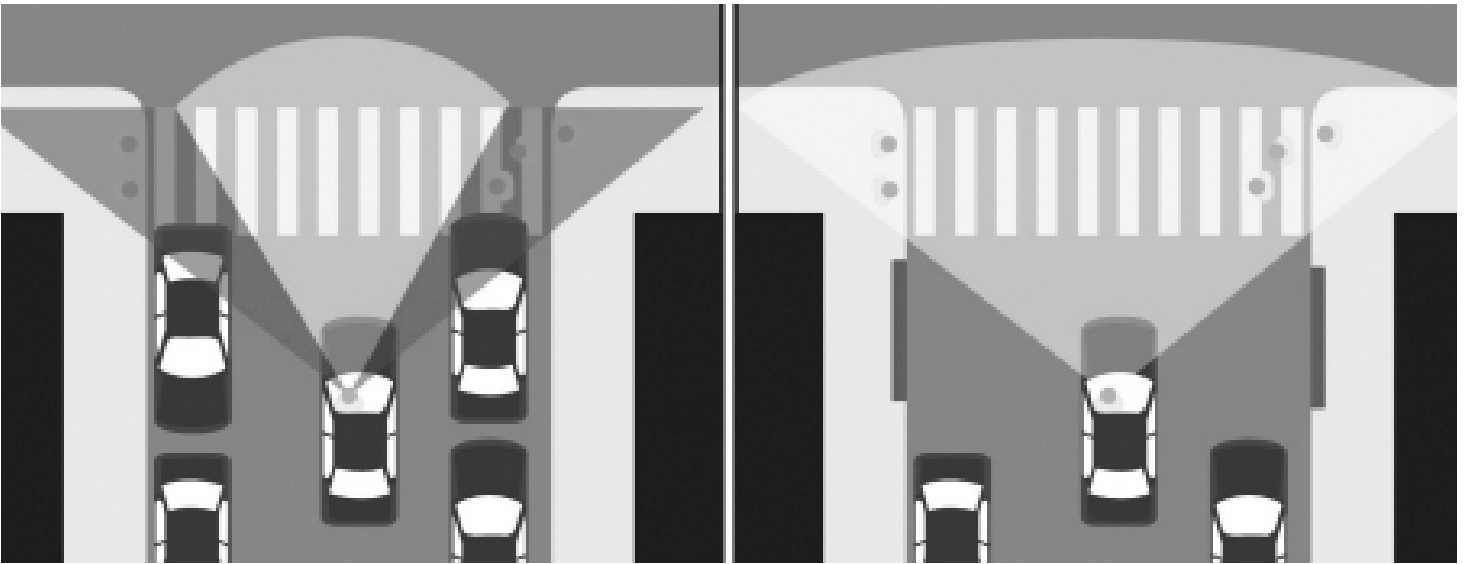
ment projects and fostering community engagement. For example, two years ago, the Panhandle Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project led to improved paving of the pedestrian-only pathway and installed new benches, updated trash cans and added the first recycling bins in the park. Danley is actively recruiting for his successor, and interested parties can reach out to board@nopna.org to learn more.

“Having a new playground presents a great opportunity for people in the neighborhood to organize and work together,” said Danley. “Hopefully, we will feel proud of the new playground and one way to express that—in addition to bringing children to play there—will be to show up for volunteer days when we help the department keep it clean and free of weeds.”

So, no matter what brings you to the eucalyptus-scented air of the Panhandle, remember that your neighbors—and you—are what make it great.

Molly Tobin has lived in NOPA for two and a half years, and loves Alamo Square Park, Yoga Garden and carnitas burritos from El Rancho Grande.

Coming Soon: A Safer Divisadero Street



In 2014, San Francisco adopted a Vision Zero initiative with the goal to eliminate traffic deaths by 2024 through better street design, education, law enforcement, and policy support.

Tragically, in the five years since San Francisco adopted Vision in 2014, two pedestrians have been killed in collisions in our neighborhood. In 2018, the NOPNA Board formed a Vision Zero Subcommittee with the goal of improving transportation safety in NOPA.

The NOPNA Vision Zero Subcommittee identifies street safety issues in the neighborhood and proposes solutions to address them in partnership with city agencies. Earlier this year, Supervisor Vallie Brown worked with NOPNA and others to allocate discretionary funding to pedestrian safety on Divisadero. The

proposed project will focus on improvements that can be implemented quickly and inexpensively, including:

- Removing parked cars at corners (“Daylighting”) and introducing pedestrian safety zones to improve drivers’ view of pedestrians in intersections, slow turning vehicles, and shorten crosswalk distances
- Advanced limit lines—the paint lines that indicate where drivers must stop at intersections—to improve visibility and reduce crosswalk conflicts
- Traffic signal improvements, such as pedestrian head-starts in crosswalks and larger traffic signal lenses

SFMTA staff presented their proposal at the NOPNA General Meeting in March. Funding for the project was approved

in May, and SFMTA has started detailed designs that will be completed by the end of this year. As SFMTA finalizes key design elements, they will reach out to businesses and neighbors for input. Construction will follow in 2020, though design elements that are easier to install may come earlier; look forward to a safer Divisadero soon!

Supervisor Brown has already indicated interest in funding a second phase of safety improvements along Divisadero. In the meantime, the Vision Zero Subcommittee will continue influencing the current project design while forming ideas for future improvements. We welcome ideas from the community. Let us know your ideas for street safety improvements or if you would like to get involved in the NOPNA Vision Zero Subcommittee.

Jeremy Besmer has lived in or near the neighborhood since 2015, and spends most of his time riding a bike, walking, and hanging out in the many nearby parks.



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